

Editorials

By
Rt. Rev. Mg. Wm. M. Hart, P. A., U. C.

A Merry Christmas

To its revered family of readers and subscribers the Courier-Journal extends its best wishes for a Merry Christmas. Joy and peace and happiness are tied up in that magic word "merry". The joy is joy in the Lord, joy in the love that prompted Him to come to earth to save all men, joy in the thought that His salvation is for all men and can never pass away.

The peace we speak of is the peace that the world cannot give, the peace that comes from God and can bring us back to God. The happiness of our Christmas greeting is a happiness that is not transient but permanent. The coming of Christ does not take away from the world everything that is unpleasant, unbecoming, untranquil, but it gives us Christ as the adequate remedy for all the ills of society and of the men who make it up.

A Merry Christmas! May our hearts be happy on this great day as we realize that God has given us His only begotten Son to

be our Redeemer. It marks His coming as the true light which illumines every man coming into this world. It marks His coming as the source of all grace. It marks His coming as the powerful means of salvation provided for all men. No one is excluded from the saving power of Christ. Man still has his free will and may reject Christ and thus bring damnation on himself but all who receive Him he gives them power to become children of God.

A Merry Christmas! Christmas—speak the word carefully thoughtfully, reverently. Be conscious of the fullness of its meaning. The Mass for Christ or Christmas—Christmas, Christ, the anointed one of God, and the Holy Sacrifice offered up for two thousand years to mark His birth into the world. Through the Mass and the Holy Eucharist the Babe of Bethlehem enters into our souls to bring to them eternal enjoyment of the joy and peace of having God with us as our Emmanuel.

A Holy Christmas

Holliness and the Christmas spirit go together. Men of perfect lives feel a special thrill of sanctity on the Birthday of the Saviour. Those that are lukewarm feel a special impulse to let their hearts burn with love for the Christ. Those who have been living lives of sin find a certain discomfort in the observance of Christmas because it reminds them that they have shut themselves off from the graces the Christ Child would give them.

A Holy Christmas! The Infant Saviour is welcoming each of us to His lowly crib.

To Mary and Joseph go His first gifts, but He is mindful also of all the children of earth who He has come to restore as children of heaven. His infant eyes behold the humble shepherds answering His call. His Sacred Heart blesses with Christmas gifts the Wise Men who come to adore Him. He is inviting us and wants us to bring Him the gift of a trusting heart. He can never feel that the effects of His coming are complete until He has won the soul of each one of us unto Himself. Let each one of us make this a Holy Christmas!

Progress Toward Cease-Fire

Christmas is the season of hope. Peace among the nations marked the time of the coming of Christ. The Prince of Peace can banish war for the world today. May we not feel that the progress toward a cease-fire agreement in Korea will continue to ultimate success under the blessing of the Child of Bethlehem.

Our prayers will be with the thousands

of war prisoners whose names have been made known as a preliminary to their release. Chinese soldiers and U. N. soldiers will share in the blessings of a cease-fire agreement that will free them from their war prisons and will relieve from active conflict their brethren on the firing line. An effective cease-fire agreement will be a wonderful Christmas gift for all the world.

Christmas For The Poor

The charity of Christ is reflected in the attention individuals and societies give to the poor at Christmas tide. Needed gifts of food and clothing are supplemented by the toys and books and games, the Christmas baskets that are sent into homes and villas, into hospitals and homes for the aged, into every dwelling where there is a candidate for Christmas benefactions.

The selfish philosophy of the Scrooges finds no support at Christmas tide. No Christian feels that he has any right to joy in the birthday of the Saviour unless he shares that joy with his less fortunate brethren. Our prayer is not merely "God Bless us" but must include the more ample prayer of Tiny Tim "God Bless us, every one".

SETTING THE TIME

The history of the life of Christ as given to us in the Holy Gospel according to St. Luke marks very clearly the time of the preaching of St. John the Baptist as the proximate preparation for Christ's public life.

No doubt is left of the exact period in which this preaching took place. The great Ruler of the world was about to appear and the petty rulers of the world held sway in the provinces where Christ was to preach. Over them all was the great Tiberius Caesar who was Emperor of Rome. Pontius Pilate was his representative as procurator of Judaea. Herod and Philip and Lysanias ruled over the nearby provinces. Annas and Caiaphas were the high priests of the Jewish Synagogue. This was the setting in which the Christ was to appear. This was the setting in which John the Baptist gathered about him near the Jordan thousands of people who came

out to hear his preaching. He preached a Baptism of Penance, urging his hearers to turn away from sin and to come close to God.

Vividly did John speak of the work that was to be done in human hearts to prepare the way of the Lord. Valleys were to be filled, mountains and hills brought low, curves and by-passes were to be eliminated and the rough terrain was to be made way for smooth roads. John was using the slogan "Make ready the way of the Lord—make straight His patha." The coming of the Redeemer was to enable all to see the salvation of God.

Setting the time. Setting the place. Posterity was to have a clear record that the preaching of John just preceding the public preaching of Christ took place when Tiberius Caesar had passed his fifteenth year as Emperor of Rome. Posterity was to know the sight of the preach-

ing of John and the subsequent preaching of Christ.

The historic river, Jordan, known of old to all the Jews was made the place for John's preaching. He urged penance on all. He baptized his hearers in the River Jordan in a Baptism of Penance that could not take away sin but could indicate that his followers were doing penance for their sins, were seeking pardon from them through their sorrow and purpose of amendment. God's grace would do the rest. These men would be found ready for Christ's teaching, docile as they listened to His words, ready for the pardon He would give to them as Redeemer of the World.

We approach the Birthday of Christ. May the preaching of John and the symbolism of his Baptism of Penance help us to make ourselves worthy of the coming of Christ. May penance and good works prepare us for a Happy Christmas.

Displaced Person



FATHER KENNEDY

An excellent subject gets less than adequate treatment in God Goes To Murderer's Row by Father Raymond, O. C. S. O. (Bruce \$3.00). It is a tribute to the intrinsic power of the story that the reader is irresistibly compelled to keep with it to the end despite an unhappy approach and Father Kennedy distressingly bad writing.

Father Raymond is telling of the conversion and advance in sanctity of Tom Penney, arrested, condemned, and executed for a murder in Kentucky some ten years ago. Here is really remarkable material, richly deserving to be made into a book, but because of the method used, far less telling than it might have been.

Tom Penney, in his early thirties, was called "Scarface" and had a long police record. Grave though that record was, murder did not figure in it until he was involved with two other men in a robbery during which two women were fatally shot. Penney stood trial for murder along with the others and like them, he was found guilty and sentenced to death in the electric chair.

There were the usual delays, the usual appeals before the sentence was carried out, but these changed nothing. There was something else, however, which changed everything. A quite extraordinary chief of police got a priest and two nuns interested in the criminal who had spent so many of his years in prison and never reformed.

Subject Good, Treatment Poor

The priest went to see him, the Lady, the aftermath of death, in a way that strikes fire in the heart of anyone who reads his messages. He corresponded with the Magdalenas of a Good Shepherd convent in Detroit, and these exchanges between the victim's soul in their cloister and the prisoner of the State who became the prisoner of Christ, are worth a lifetime's sermons.

Tears sting one's eyes as one goes through the letters which Penney wrote in the very last hours before his execution. But this is not their only effect. They also prompt one to consider with dismay the difference between one's own spiritual state after no many years of the Mass and the Sacraments, and that of the criminal who in his confinement never assisted at Mass and had Communion a very few times.

It is regrettable that the author has placed almost every possible obstacle between the reader and the subject. Instead of telling the story of the road to complete identification with the will of God, he has given it a himself called it a miracle and a miracle, loudly contributing pages and which will be an inspiration to all who hear of it. The letters are marvellous in simplicity and simplicity. Penney sees everything through the eyes of Faith. Without a trace of the sanctimonious or the stereotyped, he writes of the meaning of life, which they are here made to the relevance of Christ, the respect almost succeeds in inducing one to laugh at them.

STRANGE BUT TRUE

Little-Known Facts for Catholics
By M. J. MURRAY
Copyright 1951, B.C.W.C. Press, Boston
LLAMAS replace the ox and ass in this peculiarly South American Nativity scene by Gilka.
It is traditional in English parsonages for the demon always to enter the stage from the left. REMOVES ANY MEDICAL REALITY FROM HIS WHICH FALLS ALWAYS ON THE LEFT SIDE.
THE CRIBS OF 18th CENTURY NAPLES WERE RENOWNED FOR THEIR EXTRA-ORDINARY DETAIL. EVERY ONE OF THEM WAS A COMPLETE REPRODUCTION OF THE NATIVITY SCENE.
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General Invites Cardinal To Korea Front

Following is text of Eighth Army Commander General James A. Van Fleet's letter to His Eminence Francis Cardinal Spellman, inviting the prelate to spend Christmas Day with U. N. troops at the Korean war front:

"We know from past experience during the last war that your interest in the American Forces and those of our Allies, fighting all over the world, was indicative of your great love for them. Your visits on the several battle fronts helped to promote the morale and spiritual life of the soldiers.

"We know that the families of our soldiers also were especially happy that you were with their loved ones on the battle fronts all over the world. Your warm understanding and fatherly solicitude for the soldiers of all Faiths welded a bond of friendship among the different creeds in our Nation and preached to the whole world a lesson of peace and good will.

"Since Your Eminence has not to date been our honored guest and visitor, we once again, voicing the sincere desire of all the United Nations

Military Forces in Korea, beg your consideration for this visit to Korea."

IN HIS REPLY to General Van Fleet's invitation, Cardinal Spellman said:

"I have your letter of Oct. 22 and I thank you very much for your invitation to visit the soldiers of the Eighth Army. I consider this invitation a command and I shall be happy to leave New York by Pan-Am on Dec. 19 or 20 at the latest in order that I may be in the three most difficult places and nearest to the front that is possible on Christmas, as I shall be able to celebrate Mass in three different sectors of the front on this day. I would much prefer bringing Christmas to our boys in Korea than being in St. Patrick's Cathedral on that day.

"I shall remain as long as is necessary to visit every combat unit."

JOSEPH BRIEG Ours To Share With Enemies

A month has gone by, but not a single editor or publisher, so far as I know, has made the slightest attempt to answer the grave charge lodged against American newspapers and other publications by the U. S. Catholic bishops at their 1951 general meeting.



Neither has Joe Brieg, any public official so much as recognized the equally serious accusation made by the bishops against "so-called Christian governments."

The bishops, who number more than 100 and in moral matters represent 30,000,000 Americans, officially denounced "the indifference of so-called Christian governments" to the "rightful persecution" of the followers of Christ behind the iron curtain. The bishops further observed that they are "appalled" by the "apparent inability of the free secular press to inform the public of the true facts of the persecution." Their resolution said: "In this new agony of the Church of God, of her modest martyrs and confessors, we are left to tread the wine press alone."

THE BISHOPS had waited a long time before speaking out. They had shown extraordinary patience. And when they did speak, they spoke much more gently than I would.

For the past five years, the religious news agencies have covered remarkably well the most widespread persecution in the history of man's inhumanity to man.

The non-religious press has not covered that story. At best, it has given it the half-over-lightly; and as often as not has made the persecutors appear the hero, and the martyr the criminal.

The non-religious press has been too busy to bother to busy feeding its readers the usual food out of Hollywood, out of divorce and police courts, out of moral and intellectual sewers of the world.

The Catholic bishops spoke of the "apparent inability of the free secular press" to inform the public. But I would say bluntly that the free secular press simply finked the job.

THE SECULAR press has a thousand times more money and

men than the religious press. But the secular press doesn't want to get out of its rut. It is wallowing along in the same moral degradation, the same cowardice, the same time-serving, the same venality, which it denounces so loudly in government... and in sports.

The secular press, by and large, hasn't shown that it cares much about truth, justice, mercy, religion or reputations. It hasn't stirred itself to get the facts from behind the iron curtain. It is easier when something happens that can't be ignored, simply to publish the lying handout of a Communist government and then go back to Rita Hayworth or Ingrid Bergman.

What if Archbishops bishops, priests and Christian men and women are murdered, or sent to slave labor or thrown into Red prisons to rot? What of it? Give the people circuses!

Send a reporter to chase Al Kahn, or a photographer to trade insults with Sinatra. After all, what matters is not that religion and humanity are in the deadliest danger in history. No; what matters is Francony Tone brassing over a woman.

What if Sisters are hauled before gorilla trials in China and sentenced on charges of murdering the very infants they labored like Trojans to save? That doesn't matter. What matters is the low behavior of some Hollywood or Broadway tramp.

No, the free secular press has only a limited fund of moral indignation, and must husband it so that it can be poured out upon the head of some kid who shaded a basketball victory.

THE APPARENT inability of the free secular press to inform the public? The bishops were very charitable about it. For myself, I think I can understand why the editors and publishers have not tried to answer. They might incriminate themselves.

As for the "so-called Christian governments" it is the rare politician who has not learned, early in his career, the trick of washing his hands of the blood of just men—and even the blood of innocent women and children. The politicians learned it from Pilate, who covered up the innocent Man Whose birthday we are about to celebrate. And a lot of newspapers seem to have learned it too.

Yes, we are left to tread the wine press alone. Nevertheless, we shall tread it. And the wine will all be ours. But we will share it with our enemies—if they will have it.

PALMER GRETTA

Ours is a missionary age... a period of the Apostolate... time in which everything except the Faith has been tried, and everything has failed. We stand surrounded by the new pagans. More than 60 million Americans today have no church affiliation. What a situation! Gretta Palmer greets the world of the year, calling themselves Protestants on formal questionnaires, are pagan both in belief and practice.

So how shall we treat our pagans? What is the kindest way for an age of vast confusion (which calls its chaos wisdom) and a time of disbelief (which imagines that it has outgrown religion)? How can we help? What can we do? We can, for one thing, take a leaf from the experience of the

most successful apostles in the history of the Church: the Apostles. It is stated in the learned books that the achievements of these simple men in the first half-century of Christianity were a "moral miracle." What they preached was utterly foreign to anything the ancient world had ever believed before; they knew it, and they said so. There was no temporizing in their doctrine, no fear of giving offense. They preached the Risen Christ—and the whole world hushed its noisy turmoil to listen.

THIS IS AN age with many similarities to the First Century; it is a period of pagan despair, and of pagan pride. The Roman Empire had extended itself to the know reaches of the ancient world when the first Apostles started out. It was not only Alexander who wept that there were no other worlds to conquer; pagan civilization itself wept with him—the bitter tears of those who see no future goal.

Today, too, the men who wear Ph.D. academic honors, the statesmen who get the banquet awards, have largely exhausted the possibilities of achievement within their own narrow conceptions of the kind of universe it is.

THE NEW WORLD of 1932, like the old world of the year One, has gone as far as it can go without a supernatural aid. Man, acting on the thesis that man is god, has again attempted to fill the role of the divine; and again, he has failed. It is only by an act of stark obedience to Someone greater than himself that he can now recover his sanity and joy. And who is to recall him to this last, single chance of his recovery except ourselves—the modern Catholics... we sadly inadequate successors to the Apostles of the earliest Christian decades.

We cannot ask for another Crucifixion to save the modern paganism, as the Crucifixion

Catholic's Cue In A Dark Age

redeemed the world of Greece and Rome. This time the task of redemption is ours, not His; not Greece alone, but human cooperation with the Grace of God in the necessity of this dark hour.

The immense emphasis placed on the work of the laity by the recent Popes—the very existence of frequent and early Communion for the faithful—these things give us our cue. We are asked, as workings to do a giant's job. We, who are not saints, are required to introduce the modern world to sanctity.

What do we Catholics have to do today? Something so simple and so obvious that you and you and you are perhaps doing it already, every day: we have to bring to starving souls the Bread for which they hunger. We Catholics share a single vocation and destination in our century; the joyous job, assigned our times, of converting the whole world!

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